Apparent-Time Low Vowel Changes among Mexican-Americans and Anglos in Austin, Texas

Douglas S. Bigham
Jessica White-Sustaíta
Lars Hinrichs
Kathleen Shaw Points
Texas English

- Associated with South Midland and Southern speech (Bailey & Tillery 2006; Bailey et al. 1991; ANAE)
- Dallas area distinct - “Texas South” (ANAE)
- Based primarily on Anglo speech
- Assumed to be Anglo-led (Bailey et al., 1991)
Ongoing Texas English Research

- Houston (Niedzielski’s HUES)
- San Antonio (Bayley, Santa Ana)
- Rural Central Texas ("Springville", Bailey & Cukor-Avila)
The Texas English Project: Austin

- Austin Texas
  - Medium-sized urban center (<1 million)
  - In the 1990s, Austin’s population grew by 48% and between 2000 and 2006 it was rated as the 3rd most rapidly growing city in America.
  - 65% white, 10% African-American, 30% Latino (53% white, non-hispanic)
Fig. 2. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2002.
Fig. 3. Austin, Texas. Downtown Skyline c. 2012.
Project Goals

- Sound Change: Ethnolects in contact
- Importance of minorities’ roles in majority sound changes (Fought, 2002)
- Who leads change in ethnically-diverse contact milieux?
Minority & Majority Dialects in Contact

- Assumed that minority speakers pressured to assimilate to majority norms.
- Influence is bidirectional.
- Majority speakers may adopt minority features for covert prestige (Preston, 1999)
Research Questions

1. How are low vowels realized by Anglo and Latino residents of Austin?
2. Are those realizations different across ethnicity?
3. Are those realizations different across age?
Stylization of American English Vowels
Low Vowel Paradigm

- PRICE, LOT, THOUGHT, TRAP (Wells, 1982)
- PRICE: status of monophthongization
- LOT~THOUGHT: merged or distinct
- TRAP: raised, backed, stationary
Monophthongization: key feature of Southern speech (ANAE)
- Blocks TRAP retraction and LOT fronting (Bigham 2008)

Texas English:
- Monophthongal PRICE among Anglos
- Diphthongal PRICE among Latinos
  *(Tillery et al 2004; Thomas 2001)*
LOT~THOUGHT

- Merger: key feature of “Third Dialect” (Labov 1996)
  - Promotes TRAP retraction (Gordon 2004; Bigham 2008)

- Texas English:
  - Merger incomplete among Anglos (ANAE)
  - Merger complete among young, urban Anglos (Bailey et al 1991)
  - Merger: Latinos to LOT; Anglos to THOUGHT (Thomas 2001)
TRAP

- Movement up left periphery first stage of NCS (ANAE)
- Retraction in Canadian shift (Clarke et al. 1995; Roeder & Jarmasz 2008) and other “Third Dialects” (Eckert 2004; Bigham 2008)
- Texas English (Thomas 2001):
  - Latinos- front and low, even pre-nasally
  - Anglos- raises pre-nasally
Methodology

14 female participants
- Full adults (older) & emerging adults (younger) (Arnett 2002)
- Anglo & Latino
- Evenly distributed across categories
- Span of classes and educational levels
- Austinites

Data
- Word list recitations, $bVt$ & $hVd$ tokens, six repetitions each
- F1 and F2 measurements at five points
- Cartesian Distance
PRICE non-monophthongization

- Diphthongization, Hz

- Older Speakers
- Younger Speakers

Anglos

Latinos
LOT~THOUGHT merger

Age: $p = .30$
Ethnicity: $p = .16$
Interaction: $p = .23$
“LOT & THOUGHT”

- Older Anglos
- Younger Anglos
- Older Latinos
- Younger Latinos
TRAP fronting (!)

Age: $p < .0001$
Ethnicity: $p = .006$
Interaction: $p = .21$
Conclusion: *Austin* Texas English

- **PRICE**
  - completely diphthongal
  - No difference between Anglo & Latino speakers

- **LOT~THOUGHT**
  - no distinction in Latino & Anglo placement
  - distinct in production but becoming closer
  - majority-led change

- **TRAP**
  - fronting (!)
  - minority-led change
What’s Next for the Texas English Project?

- Adding a third, extra-older, generation
- Adding males to the data
- Adding African-American speakers
- Analyzing additional stylistic contexts for data
The End

Thanks to: University of Texas at Austin

- Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services
- Division of Instructional Innovation & Assessment
- Department of English

Texas English Project: www.texasenglish.org

- Lars Hinrichs: lars@mail.utexas.edu
- Douglas Bigham: douglas.s.bigham@gmail.com
- Jessica White-Sustaíta: jessicawhite@mail.utexas.edu